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## Bush lobs soft pitches to dictators

EVANSTON—We measure character by how a person stands up to a bully and how a statesman reacts to a dictator. George Bush has three times failed that test.

He has served as a batting practice pitcher for three of the worst dictators of the 1980s: Ferdinand Marcos of the Philippines, Gen. Manuel Noriega of Panama and the Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran. All three have effectively used his soft pitches in the pursuit of their ruthless, dictatorial policies.

After he became Vice President, Bush visited the Philippines and toasted Marcos' "commitment to democracy." At that time, according to Amnesty International reports, Marcos' crimes were adding a new expression for murder to the English language. It was "salvaging," the untraceable, extrajudicial killing of a suspected political opponent. The subordinates of the Filipino dictator were also using torture methods ranging from ice blocks applied to pregnant women to electrodes on men's genitals.

Now, seven years later, in the first presidential debate, George Bush tried to explain his toast by saying that Marcos had been on the ground defending democracy at the time Bush was flying a World War II mission over Manila. Yet, a 1986 New York Times article reported that the U.S. Army had investigated Marcos' wartime claims and concluded they were "fraudulent" and "absurd," a fact that Bush, as the most vocal defender of Marcos in the U.S., must have learned. The families of those who died opposing Marcos are acutely aware that Marcos proudly wore the George Bush endorsement as though it were another medal on his chest, a justification of his policies and an invitation to continue them.

Gen. Noriega should be a deep embarrassment to Bush from his days as head of the CIA.

Noriega was then a regular informant for that agency. Bush's successor realized the conflict and dropped Noriega. Despite the fact that the Vice President had headed the foreign intelligence-gathering agency of this country, he maintains that he was not aware of Noriega's drug running until the Panamanian dictator was indicted by the

United States earlier this year.

George Bush was also, according to his version, unaware of Noriega's drug-related activities all the while that Bush was heading the current administration's antidrug efforts. What blinded Bush was obviously not the lack of available facts, but something intrinsic in his softness toward dictators. If Bush is not embarrassed, it can only be because he lacks a sense of right and wrong in dealing with dictators and drug runners.

The same pattern stands out in his treatment of the Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran. The present administration dealt with Khomeini's representatives in the tragic arms-for-hostages deal. This dictator has used arms against both American citizens and citizens of neighboring states, but his greatest brutality has been felt by the ordinary citizens of Iran, especially those who opposed him. This has meant execution of women on charges of adultery and the massacre of thousands of members of the B'hai faith.

Yet Vice President Bush, who headed the antiterrorism commission, sat through repeated meetings of administration officials on sending arms to Iran without voicing a single political, personal or moral objection. The history of this century has taught us that dictators feed their ruthless lusts on just such silence on the part of government leaders.

A Protestant minister who was a long-term prisoner of conscience in South Korea said several years ago in a meeting in Sen. Charles Percy's office that he, as a political prisoner, could tell who was the president of the United States because of how he was treated. His comment reminds the American people of our responsibility to those persons who are victims of tyrants.

George Bush—as a leader of this country, whether he is elected president or not—owes it to all victims of despots, including U.S. soldiers who died fighting dictatorship, to stop lobbying soft pitches to the Marcoses, Noriegas and Khomeinis of the world.

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